

CLAIMS:

1.    A method wherein a cellular communications service provider authenticates a provider of a service running at a wireless hotspot, the method comprising:  
        receiving an indication of potential use of a specified wireless hotspot from a user;  
        verifying the trustworthiness of the provider of the service with a party independent from said provider; and  
        on successful verification of the provider of the service, providing the user with a confirmation that the provider of the service is authenticated by the cellular communications service provider.
2.    A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the service is use of the hotspot and the provider of the service is a wireless hotspot provider.
3.    A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the service is a service running over infrastructure of the wireless hotspot and the provider of the service is not the provider of the wireless hotspot.
4.    A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the confirmation provided comprises a key enabling the user to use the service provided by the provider.
5.    A method as claimed in claim 1, further including tracking the location of a user via a user's wireless communications device; and  
        predicting, from the location of the user, a service at a wireless hotspot within current or future range of the user.
6.    A method as claimed in claim 5, further including supplying the user with information concerning the location of one or more hotspots close to the user or closest to the user.
7.    A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the indication of potential use is determination that the hotspot is within present or future range of the user.

8. A method as claimed in claim 7, further including receiving a positive request to use the service, and commencing authentication of the provider of the service before the positive request is received.

9. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the indication of potential use is a positive request from the user.

10. A computer system for a cellular telecommunications provider, comprising a processor arranged for:

receiving an indication of potential use of a specified wireless hotspot from a user;

identifying services available at the specified wireless hotspot;

authenticating providers of the services available at the specified wireless hotspot; and

preparing authentication information for use by the user.

11. A computer system as claimed in claim 10, wherein in preparing the authentication information the processor is arranged for generating a cryptographic key.

12. A computer system as claimed in claim 10, wherein the processor is further arranged for receiving location information representing the location of the user, and for determining from the location information one or more wireless hotspots that are or will be within the range of the user.

13. A computer system as claimed in claim 12, wherein the processor is further arranged for (a) receiving a positive request for use of a service at the hotspot from the user, (b) commencing authenticating a provider of the service before the positive request is received and (c) preparing authentication information for use by the user after the positive request is received.

14. A storage medium storing a computer-readable program code thereon, the computer-readable program code being arranged to cause a computer system of a cellular communications provider to:

receive an indication of potential use of a specified wireless hotspot from a user;  
identify services available at the specified wireless hotspot;  
authenticate providers of the services available at the specified wireless hotspot;  
and  
prepare authentication information for provision to the user.

15. A method wherein a cellular telecommunications provider authorises a user to use a location-dependent service, the method comprising:

tracking the location of the user via a wireless communications device of the user;

determining that the user is or will be within an operating range of the location-dependent service;

authenticating a provider of the service; and

authenticating the provider of the service to the user.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, further comprising receiving a request to use the location-dependent service by the user.

17. A method as claimed in claim 16, wherein authenticating the provider of the service commences prior to receiving the request authenticating the provider of the service subsequent to receiving the request.